Social Welfare Cell is a UNHCR funded project working under the Commissioner Afghan Refugees, North West Frontier Province (NWFP), established in May 1987 to work for the vulnerable Afghan refugees. Presently the Cell is working in 12 Afghan Refugees Districts/Agencies throughout the NWFP (for each district there is a District Coordinator, for some districts female Coordinators are serving, too). There are over 250 camps with approximately 2 - 3 million population to be served. The main task of Social Welfare Cell is:

a) identification/verification of vulnerable groups;
b) self-help community based activities;
c) coordination with local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

From January to June 1992, Social Welfare Cell Coordinators verified 303 disabled of different categories throughout the Province. Majority of the disabled were mentally retarded and physically handicapped. Due to the close cooperation with different NGOs all 303 disabled were referred according to their needs/nature of disability for assistance. Total number of disabled/organizations involved and type of assistance provided to them are, as under:

| S.No. | No. of Disabled | Organization | Assistance/Training provided |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | 97 | Radda Barnen Training Unit | Training purposes |
| 2. | 75 | International Rescue Commit. | Loan/Vocational training |
| 3. | 20 | Pakistan Red Crescent | Physiotherapy and other disabilities |
| 4. | 60 | Sandi Gall's Afghan Appeal | Artificial limbs and physiotherapy |
| 5. | 24 | Inter Church Aid | Relief Assistance |
| 6. | 2 | Commissioner for Afghan Refugees | Registration (ration passes) |
| 7. | 10 | SOS/PG Belgium | Vocational training |
| 8. | 3 | Okenden Venture | Vocational training |

| S.No. | No. of Disabled | Organization | Assistance/Training provided |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9. | 1 | GTZ (German Tech. co-op) | Vocational training and basic education. |
| 10. | 5 | UAE Relief | Food Assistance |
| 11. | 6 | Different NGOs | Financial Assistance |

All the efforts, done for the rehabilitation of the disabled, were through community involvement and refugees participation. Identification process of the disabled was done by more than 300 trained refugees who were selected from the refugees' community and later on trained by Radda Barnen Training Unit and United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). These trained community volunteers (CVs) involved other NGOs to train disabled refugees in different trades, ;i.e. tailoring, embroidery, watch repair, etc.

After having completed training the disabled refugees were then supported through CVs and NGOs by providing them jobs or assisting them starting a small-scale enterprise ;in their own community. A few started projects on self-help basis 'by the disabled for the disabled'.

Refugees in general prefer those projects that generates income. In case of disabled, where the dependency syndrome commonly encounters, is a major obstacle. One of the foremost tasks of the social workers is to help the disabled overcome this and the overwhelming feeling of low self-esteem, and motivate them towards self-reliance. To further this rehabilitation and reintegration process, the Cell and the CVs, with joint efforts approached disabled and community, alike.

Usually disabled were felt a burden on their family and left isolated by their community. The Coordinator and CVs overcame this attitude and greatly contributed to the successful integration of the disabled who were trained to earn livelihood for themselves and their families and thus, gained self-respect in their society, that previously considered them just isolated and useless species. Their example further helped other disabled overcome their weaknesses and become an accepted member of their families and their community too.

Without proper planning, coordination and the cooperation of many GNOs, successful implementation of a project of this nature would have been impossible. Through material assistance and other joint efforts; CVs, Social Welfare Coordinators, UNHCR, and NGOs; the disabled were enabled to do something for themselves, their families, and the community and, therefore, become an active part of the society.

# CASE STUDY SUMMARY

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Name: | Mullah Abdul Majeed | |
| Sex: | Male | Age: 60 |
| Marital Status: | Married | |
| Nationality: | Afghan | |
| Educational Status: | Religious Education | |
| Present Occupation: | Tailor | |
| Residence: | Barakai Fazal No. 1 Refugee camp - Swabi, NWFP. | |

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## Background:

Mullah Abdul Majeed was born about 60 years ago in village Ali Khel, Baghlan Province, Afghanistan. He is a Pakhtun Afghan, married, with six children, who worked as a labourer. He took refugee in Pakistan eleven years back due to the Russian invasion.

## Description of Disability:

While he was doing his routine work, a Russian plane suddenly appeared and started bombarding his village. He jumped into the ice-cold water of a stream and stayed there fore nine long hours. After which, villagers helped him out. Thereafter, he was paralysed by legs and also had a hunch back.

## Rehabilitation Plan:

A member of Social Welfare Committee and trained community volunteer (CV), Mirza Mohammad, identified Abdul Majeed and Social Welfare Coordinator contacted NGOs to assist and involve him in an Income Generating (IG) project. At that time, the camp was neglected by most of the NGOs because of the law and order situation prevailing. However, SWC Coordinator with full support from Programme Officer, IGP and Social Services Officer, UNHCR, succeeded to motivate SOS/PG Belgium for the said camp. Sixteen more disabled were identified/verified and placed in different trades within the camp. The course was for 10 months during which the beneficiaries received Rs. 300 stipend per month and, after completion of training, were issued a sewing machine.

## Needs. Problem. Assistance:

The 14 years war has brought tremendous miseries to the people of Afghanistan. Hence, the disability ratio in Afghan refugees is high. Due to the problematic situation in the camp and ;its huge size (it is reportedly the largest refugee camp in the world), NGOs were hesitating to commence working there. The disabled longed for an opportunity to be involved in IG Projects, ;while the NGOs had limited openings to accommodate more than a fraction of the disabled.

First approach was by CV, coordinated by Coordinator SWC and supported by UNHCR, with implementation by those NGOs that started working in camps where the refugees could not be supported before.

## Strategies / Approaches:

Social Services Officer, UNHCR, arranged meetings to coordinate all collaborators, At last, with the help of the SOS/PG, Belgium, the programme was launched. All the refugees appreciated the idea of rehabilitation of disabled.

Mullah Abdul Majeed, a religious teacher instructs children in his neighbourhood. At the same time, he teaches tailoring to these children. He is making two suits per day; for each he earns Rs.30. He repairs old clothes of the refugees in his neighbourhood free of charge. The neighbours compensate him by reciprocating his favours and carrying water from the well and giving him milk for tea and sometimes small amounts of cash. With the help of CVs, he could start a self-help project 'by the disabled for the disabled'. CVs donated sewing machine and stitching materials and, with their own contributions, rented a shop in the local market.

## Problems:

1. The main problem was that disabled refugees were interested to get training within their community, not too far from their home.

2. To identify and motivate those NGOs which were interested in starting disabled rehabilitation projects in such problematic environments.

3. To verify the most deserving, among the disabled, in view of the limited opportunities available.

4. To trace those trades/crafts/skills where the disabled takes interest such as embroidery and tailoring.

5. Some need physical treatment besides Vocational training, too.

6. They are immobile and need be given mobility.

7. Convince the Community to understand and help overcoming their problems.

8. Market , their finished goods and follow them up for longer.

## Recommendations:

The disabled should be given apprenticeship not far from their residential areas. Most of them are static, so for mobilization they require resources. Wheel chairs can't operate within most of the camps and inside Afghanistan, so donkeys or horses are the best transportation means. More trades of interest to the disabled should be introduced. High disability ratio will be an obstacle to train all, so self-help community participation projects should be launched. Together with vocational training, Medical treatment, education and schooling should be extended, as well.

International Workshop on

Assistance to Disabled Refugees

Peshawar - PAKISTAN

04 - 09 October, 1992

# Provincial Report (NWFP) on Disabled Afghan Refugees January - June, 1992


by

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